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C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 000652

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STATE PLEASE PASS TO WHA/CCA, DRL/MLA, AND IO/SHA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/21/2015

TAGS: PHUM CU EC CHR

SUBJECT: EMBASSY LOBBYING HARD FOR CUBA RESOLUTION

REF: A. QUITO 625

1B. SECSTATE 44494

Classified By: Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney for Reason 1.4 (B)

11. (C) Summary: We understand the critical need for Ecuador to support the UNHRC resolution on Cuba and the impact every country has on the outcome. Historically Ecuador has abstained on the issue of Cuba. The GOE is politically unstable and considers Cuba a sensitive issue. Given the situation in Ecuador, it will be quite difficult to convince the GOE to vote in favor of the resolution. Nevertheless, we have a comprehensive strategy to lobby high-level GOE officials, and the Ambassador and DCM are actively working their contacts. After we finish discussions in Quito, likely we will recommend Washington officials make a few calls to reinforce our efforts. (See paragraph 5.) End Summary.

Ecuador Historically Cautious on Cuba
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12. (C) The GOE is very cautious on the issue of Cuba and has an historic policy of abstention on Cuba-related international organization resolutions. Cuba is a politically sensitive issue for Ecuador's weak government, and most GOE decisions of late are driven by a desire to maintain political stability. Ecuador has only voted in favor of the UNHRC resolution on Cuba once, in 1999, and does not have a good track record of stepping up to the plate on controversial issues. Furthermore, Cuban influence in Ecuador is surprisingly invasive, especially in indigenous areas (Cuban doctors, educational exchanges, etc.); Gutierrez does not want to give the indigenous another reason to take to the streets.

Robust Action Plan Targets High-Level Officials
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13. (SBU) From the Ambassador down, we are discussing the importance of the Cuba vote with our GOE contacts and emphasizing this opportunity for Ecuador to assert its lack of tolerance for flagrant human rights offenders, such as Cuba. The Ambassador called President Gutierrez, ostensibly to wish him a happy birthday but actually to discuss his possible Venezuela trip (septel) and Cuba. He was in the middle of a public event but wanted to meet with her next week to discuss the issues further. She also discussed the matter with Minister of Foreign Trade Ivonne Baki by telephone and will follow up in person. FM Patricio Zuquilanda is out of the country until March 31, but the Ambassador has arranged a meeting with him as soon as he returns.

14. (SBU) The DCM is also lobbying his contacts. In FM Zuquilanda's absence, he will call Vice FM Edwin Johnson, who is in New York currently. The DCM also plans to talk to Presidential Secretary Carlos Polit, one of the Embassy's closest Cabinet contacts. Acting PolCouns met with presidential advisor Carlos Larrea today and urged him to push to change Ecuador's stance on Cuba. We also will meet with Mauricio Pozo, Ecuadorian Ambassador-designate to Washington. Last we will canvass friendly missions, especially the Spanish and Holy See's, which have helped us in the past in basic human rights-related demarches.

Comment:
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15. (C) Convincing Ecuador to support the Cuban resolution will be an uphill battle. However, we appreciate the significance of Ecuador's vote and are determined to use our access fully. We will report back with the results of these meetings and will recommend Washington's assistance in placing phone calls to key GOE decision makers once we have fully discuss this issue in Ecuador. We anticipate calls by Assistant Secretary Roger Noriega to FM Zuquilanda and Deputy Secretary Robert Zoellick to President Gutierrez to be the

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best complements to our efforts.

KENNEY